

TTC Students write and read stories for local primary school

Kigali, Rwanda—Tuesday, October 23, 2012

Thirty Teacher Training College (TTC) students read their own original stories to neighboring primary school students at Academie de la Salle in Byumba on Friday afternoon. They also encouraged the primary students to read and write their own stories.

At the event, organized by VSO volunteer Dorothy Nelson, primary school students crowded together in small circles to listen to the TTC students' stories. TTC students asked the children questions about the story before, during, and after reading to engage them in the story.

"It is my hope that these stories will inspire these primary students to write their own stories," says Nelson.

TTC students wrote these stories in July at a writer's workshop facilitated by VSO as part of the USAID-funded Literacy, Language, and Learning (L3) Initiative. For some, it was the first time they had ever written a story.

"This writer's workshop can stimulate our hidden talents," says TTC student Themistocles Abayisaba, who has continued writing stories after the workshop's completion.

According to L3's Technical Director Norma Evans, TTC students should be encouraged to use stories in their classrooms when they become teachers. "Children need constant exposure to written content to learn to read," she says. "Stories show students that reading is meaningful, that it has a purpose, and it gets students interested in reading."

Not only is reading in the classroom essential, but so is writing. Evans also says that even from Primary 1 students should have opportunities for authentic writing—not merely copying from the board, but writing to express themselves. "Writing helps students figure out which letters represent the individual sounds they hear in words," Evans says. "This helps them to be better readers."

The Kigali Institute of Education, with support from the L3 initiative, is revising TTC curricula to include a focus on writing and the importance of story in the classroom. VSO volunteers with specialization in literacy will support the implementation of the new curricula and will also organize activities such as writer's workshops and writing competitions at the TTCs to encourage a culture of reading and writing.

Jean Bosco Bigirimana, principal of TTC Byumba, is pleased with this focus on story. "This is the beginning. This is your first story," he told the TTC students at Friday's event. "Write many stories. Use the stories to teach your pupils when you leave school to be teachers."